

Governor Stephen Hopkins House
15 Hopkins Street
Providence, Rhode Island
Providence County

HABS No. 28

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PHOTOGRAPHS

*WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS*

Historic American Buildings Survey
Philip D. Creer, District Officer
14 College Street, Providence, R. I.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-155

STEPHEN HOPKINS HOUSE

Address: 12 Hopkins Street (southwest corner Hopkins and Benefit Streets), Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island.

An addendum to:
Governor Hopkins House
15 Hopkins Street,
Providence, Rhode Island
in HABS Catalog (1941)

Present owner: State of Rhode Island

Present Occupant: The house is maintained by the Society of Colonial Dames of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

Present Use: Museum

Brief Statement of Significance: Stephen Hopkins, Governor of Rhode Island, Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court, Chancellor of Brown University, member of the Continental Congress, signer of the Declaration of Independence, lived in this house from 1743 'til his death in 1785. The house, at which George Washington was a guest, is a well-restored example of a mid-eighteenth century wooden structure.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: In 1743, Stephen Hopkins purchased a strip of land from John Field with a two-story, one-room, end chimney house on it which forms the ell of the present house. The house was acquired by the State when it was moved to its present location in 1928.
2. Date of erection: The rear wing of the house was built some time before 1743; the front main block was presumably built soon after Hopkins bought the place, c. 1743.
3. Notes on alterations and additions: The strip of land Hopkins bought from Field on which he built, was at the northeast corner of South Main and Hopkins Streets. In 1809 the house was moved half a block to 9 Hopkins Street. In 1928 the house was moved to its present site and restored by Norman Morrison Isham, architect. The following notes are from: Norman Morrison Isham, 1928.

"The Stephen Hopkins House," Rhode Island History, Vol. XXIII, No. 2 (April, 1930), p. 54:

The front doorway and door, some of the window frames and all but one sash are new (copied from the original). The hearth tiles are original. The underpinnings and steps are modern. The roof has been shingled, but the chimneys are old.

The entry or central hall leads across the front block of the house. The stairs in this hall are original, made of maple, and two or three have "curly grain." One baluster and two drops were replaced. The plaster has been mended and surfaced with Swedish putty. The floor boards are original in the hall.

Floors, doors with panels over the doors, and mantels in the west parlor and the east room are original. There is a fine shell cupboard over the fireplace in the east room.

The keeping room, part of the ell, has simple finish. The floor is new, also in the bedroom. East side corner cupboard is new. Original sash is in passage between parlor and ell.

Second floor west parlor chamber has original paneling over mantel; original floor. This was Washington's room. The east chamber, a small room over east room, has a low mantel; floor is old. The two chambers at the south end of ell, were made after Hopkins' time; above the original kitchen chamber which originally was a garret.

Furniture belonging to Hopkins:

Two Queen Anna Townsend side chairs

One cradle

Decanter set, gift to Hopkins by George Washington, who visited here twice; spent night here and was given dinner here.

"The furniture in the house represents, except for the chair now at Brown University, which stood in the entry and the clock and desk which were in the parlor, the furniture which belonged to Governor Hopkins at his death as it is set forth in the inventory now on record at the City Hall. As some pieces which we should naturally expect to find are not recorded, it is possible that they had been given to Ruth, his daughter-in-law or to Rufus, his son before Hopkins' death.

4. Sources of information: John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), pp. 30, 31, 33.
Antoinette Forrester Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett and Massie, 1937), pp. 133, 137, 142, 145, 161, 171, 206, 207, 209, 212, 275.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a well-restored example of a medium-size, wooden house of the mid-eighteenth century.
2. Condition of fabric: excellent.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: L-shape with later front block facing north about 30' (4 bays) x 15', two stories high, and earlier rear wing, about 20' x 28', one-and-a-half stories high, with the only original entrance facing west.
2. Foundations: brick above grade, wooden concrete below grade.
3. Wall construction: heavy timber frame, plank walls, clapboards, beaded corner boards.
4. Stoops, bulkheads: stone stoops at both entrances, apparently not original. Large, wooden bulkhead to cellar on east side of earlier wing.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doors and doorways: Main north entrance with six-panel, top-lighted door in pilastered frontispiece with pediment, is not original, but replaces an original window. West door in original location a replacement; simple doorway with top light and wood lintel apparently original.
 - b. Windows: Double-hung wood windows with nine-light over nine-light sash with thick wood mullions. 6" x 8" panes in earlier wing, 7" x 9" panes in later wing. Smaller six-over-six light attic window. Plain window frames with thick, molded sills; high wood lintels on sides and earlier wing, molded window cornices on the north front. Second floor window cornices continuous with bed mold of roof cornice. No shutters.

6. Chimneys: Two tall brick chimneys with stepped-in tops.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roofs, asphalt shingles.
 - b. Cornice: Boxed eaves with molded cornices.
 - c. Dormers: One small hip-roofed dormer on earlier wing.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Front block of the house has centre-hall plan, one room deep, with fireplaces on the rear wall. Rear wing behind the west parlor has a large kitchen, a small bedroom, and a secondary stair hall.
2. Stairways: Front stair, straight run with winders at the top, closed string with heavy torus molding on outside string, plaster below outside string, turned balusters, square newels; half balusters about the newels, acorn drops, two of which are replacements; stairs continue to attic up two flights. Stair in rear wing has balusters sawn from flat boards with molded profiles; rail is molded on outer face only; rear stairs possibly not original but typical of c. 1720 in Rhode Island.
3. Flooring: Floor boards about 12" to 14" wide.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are plaster with molded chair rail only. Plaster ceilings with molded cornice in west parlor and the east room. Cornice breaks forward at the verticals of the window and door frames. Corner posts, where exposed on inside, are cased.
5. Doorways and doors: Six-panel doors with quarter-round moldings and raised flush panels in west parlor and front entrance; two-panel doors elsewhere. Over-door panels in west parlor and west chamber above.
6. Trim: Mitred, molded door end window frames. An original Spanish brown color has been reproduced throughout most of the house; an old shade of blue green used in east chamber. Fireplace in west parlor, square hearth tiles, opening enframed with bolection moldings, round-headed panels flank a shell cupboard over fireplace. East room has paneled mantel, flanking cupboards, about 4" mantel shelf supported on classic run molding, one large panel above shelf, violet Biblical tiles added at restoration. Paneled mantel in west chamber, bolection molding around opening, three vertical panels over opening. West chamber has ceiling cornice sections above door end windows only.

No baseboards in west chamber; plaster has been painted black to simulate baseboard.

7. Hardware: East (interior) and west (exterior) doors into rear ell with strap hinges and knocker latches. Most interior doors have H-L hinges and bean pattern. Suffolk latches.
8. Lighting: Electric.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces north on a southwest corner lot, secondary entrance facing west, with yard on the east and west sides.
2. Enclosures: Reproduction of typical early wood picket fence on north and east sides.
3. Walks: Flagstone and brick walks.
4. Landscaping: A period garden on west side of the house designed by Alden Hopkins, descendant of Stephen Hopkins and a resident architect at Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
and Antoinette F. Downing
for the Providence Preservation Society
August, 1961.